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**Alberta Emergency Management Agency
Fire Commissioner's Office**

**2007 Fire Prevention Week Campaign
October 7-13, 2007**

Alberta

ATCO Electric

ATCO Gas

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Fire prevention and safety tips

Safety tips sheets are available on the Fire Commissioner's Office website at:

http://www.municipalaffairs/gov.ab.ca/fco_FireFacts.htm

Access to the online kit

Visit the Fire Commissioner's Office website at:

http://www.municipalaffairs/gov.ab.ca/fco_FireFacts.htm. Under the "Fast Facts" section on the right hand side, click on the "Fire Prevention Week Campaign Kit option.

Contact the Fire Commissioner's Office

For more information on Fire Prevention Week, contact the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 427-8392. Outside Edmonton, call toll-free within Alberta by dialing 310-0000.

Message from the Managing Director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency



Fire Prevention Week is an important annual event that takes place across North America. The designated week serves as reminder of the importance of fire safety and fire prevention.

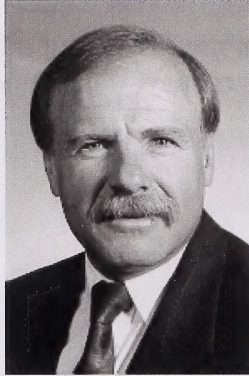
The Alberta Emergency Management Agency, which encompasses both the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office and Emergency Management Alberta, encourages all Albertans to use this week to practice their fire safety skills. Fire can spread so quickly, and when the smoke alarm sounds, you may only have a few seconds or minutes to get out alive. This year's theme of *It's Fire Prevention Week: Practice Your Escape Plan* sets the stage for Albertans to create a fire escape plan and practice it with family members. Please make fire safety a priority and use this week to ensure your family is prepared and knows what to do when the alarm sounds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. David Hodgins".

E. David Hodgins
Managing Director
Alberta Emergency Management Agency

Message from the Alberta Fire Commissioner



In celebration of Fire Prevention Week, each year the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office highlights things that Albertans can do to keep their homes and families safe from fire.

The recent catastrophic fires across Alberta this summer caused extensive damage to both existing and potential new homes and left a large group of people without their possessions or a place to live.

Many steps can be taken to prevent fires in the home, however, if one does occur the most important thing is to get out alive. Fortunately, in the recent fires, everyone did get out alive. But that isn't always the case, and even one fire death or injury is one too many. That's why this year's Fire Prevention Week theme *It's Fire Prevention Week: Practice Your Escape Plan* is so relevant to Alberta. By having a fire escape plan and practicing it with everyone in your family, you can greatly increase the likelihood that your family will be able to get out alive should a fire occur at your home.

In addition to showcasing this year's theme, Fire Prevention Week is also a good time to remind Albertans about general fire safety. As a result, this kit includes information about creating and practicing escape plans as well as how to prevent cooking fires, the importance of smoke alarms and helping seniors and persons with disabilities to safely escape a fire situation. We've also included other fire safety articles that focus on making and keeping homes safe.

For more information about fire prevention and safety, visit the Fire Commissioner's Office website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_index.htm. Alternatively, you can contact your local fire department for more information about Fire Prevention Week.

Yours in fire safety,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read "Rick McCullough". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "R" and a trailing flourish.

Rick McCullough
Alberta Fire Commissioner

Fast facts about fire in Alberta

- On average there are 5,800 fires reported to the Alberta Fire Commissioner each year.
- These fires result in an average of 33 deaths, 312 injuries and \$300 million in direct property loss.
- Homes account for 28 per cent of all fires.
- Homes account for 63 per cent of all fire deaths and 60 per cent of all fire injuries.
- 30 per cent of all property losses are due to fires happening in the home.
- Most home fires start in the kitchen due to unattended cooking.
- Other common areas of fire origin are bedrooms, living rooms, exterior walls, laundry area and heating equipment rooms.
- Careless smoking is the number one cause of home fire deaths.
- Unattended cooking is the number one cause of home fire injuries.
- Seniors have the highest risk of dying in a home fire in Alberta.
- Smoke inhalation is the number one cause of death in home fires.
- Most fire deaths occur in people who are asleep at the time of fire.
- One in every five fires in Alberta is deliberately set.

Statistics provide a clear picture

The numbers are staggering ... homes account for 63 percent of all fire deaths and 60 percent of all fire injuries. That's why this year's Fire Prevention Week theme is focused on homes and the importance of getting out alive. "Plan your escape" not only includes how to exit a home safely; it also focuses on the importance of creating and regularly practicing an escape plan. With Albertans paying greater attention to fire prevention safety, hopefully these statistics can be dramatically reduced.

To get a sense of the ramifications of fires in Alberta, review the following statistics tables. They indicate the number of fire deaths and injuries for the past five years as well as the dollar losses, types of homes and major causes of home fires. The tables also break down the age groups, cause of deaths, condition of fatality and action of fatality. As they say, knowledge is power. Being more informed about fires in Alberta can help save lives!

Fire losses in Alberta homes, 2001 – 2005

Source: Fire Commissioner's Office, Alberta Emergency Management Agency,
Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing

Year	Fires	Deaths	Injuries	\$ Losses
2001	7,022	43	393	229,233,932
2002	5,995	31	307	272,677,013
2003	5,645	24	322	348,374,771
2004	5,137	27	291	202,624,657
2005	5,190	38	247	449,578,470
Total	28,989	163	1,560	1,502,488,843
Average	5,800	33	312	300,497,769

On average there are 5,800 fires a year in Alberta reported to the Fire Commissioner's Office. These fires result in 33 deaths, 312 injuries, and more than \$300 million in property losses.

Home fires by type of home in Alberta, 2001 – 2005

Type of Home	Fires	% of Fires	Deaths	% of Deaths	Injuries	% of Injuries	\$ Losses	% of \$ Losses
One/Two Family Dwellings	5,518	69	65	64	544	59	284,489,232	64
Apartments, Tenements, Flats	1,896	24	23	23	299	33	138,513,777	31
Mobile Homes	586	7	14	14	77	8	22,334,005	5
Total	8,000	100	102	100	920	100	445,337,014	100

Homes account for 28 per cent of all fires, 63 per cent of all fire deaths, 60 per cent of all fire injuries, and 30 per cent of all property losses due to fire in Alberta. Most home fires start in the kitchen area. Other common areas of fire origin are bedrooms, living rooms, exterior walls, laundry area and heating equipment room.

Major known causes of home fires in Alberta, 2001 – 2005

Fire Causes	Number of Fires	%	Deaths	Injuries	Property Loss \$
Cooking	1,692	21	8	251	37,294,458
Smoking	973	12	27	136	43,819,397
Arson/Set Fire	970	12	10	81	52,127,222
Heating Equipment Related	857	11	5	91	45,893,761
Electrical Distribution Equipment	596	7	7	35	42,056,664
Exposure Fire	516	6	0	2	75,897,187
Candle (accident)	402	5	2	81	15,431,788
Child Fire Play	246	3	4	54	10,134,622
Clothes Dryer	194	2	1	9	3,799,068
Appliance/Equipment Related	184	2	1	22	8,973,023
Light/Fluorescent Bulb	172	2	0	12	6,999,224
Flammable/Combustible Liquid Ignition	72	1	0	18	3,287,091
Welding/Torch Too Close	50	1	0	3	1,012,924
Flammable Gas Ignition	33	0	6	16	2,290,304
Inadequate Control of Open Fire	8	0	0	0	739,781
Other Causes/Unknown	1,035	13	31	109	95,580,500
Total	8,000	100	102	920	445,337,014

Cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and home fire injuries in Alberta. Approximately 35% of cooking fires involve overheated cooking oil igniting in a pot or pan while frying. Smoking related fires are the second most common type of home fire that account for the highest number of fire deaths.

Fire deaths by age group, in Alberta homes, 2001-2005

Age Group	Number of Deaths	%
Children 12 years and under	10	10
Youth, 12-17	2	2
Adults, 18-64 years	71	70
Seniors, 65+	19	19
Total	102	101

Although seniors accounted for 19% of fire deaths, they have the highest risk of dying in a home fire in Alberta.

Fire deaths in Alberta homes by cause of death, 2001-2005

Cause of Death	Number of Deaths	%
Smoke inhalation	77	76
Burns	9	9
Physical injury	4	4
Other, unknown	12	12
Total	102	101

Inhalation of smoke is the number one cause of death in home fires. Smoke has toxic gases such carbon monoxide, hydrogen cyanide, etc. that can be lethal. Early detection of smoke during a fire and sounding an alarm by a smoke alarm can provide valuable life-saving seconds to escape from a building. In addition, a well-practiced fire escape plan will enable everyone to escape quickly and safely.

Condition of fire fatalities in Alberta homes, 2001 – 2005

Condition of Fatality	Number of Deaths	%
Asleep	22	22
Impaired by alcohol/drugs/medication	21	21
Awake and normal	15	15
Unable to escape	7	7
Condition unknown/unclassified	37	34
Total	102	99

Most fire deaths occur in people who are asleep at the time of the fire. An early warning from a smoke alarm could save lives. A well-practiced fire escape plan can also enable people to know what to do during a fire emergency. In some fires, such as those involving cooking, the victim is close at hand and awake. Using safe methods to put a fire out and/or escape can save lives in such fires.

Action of fire fatalities in Alberta homes, 2001-2005

Action of Fatality	Number of Deaths	%
Did not act	18	18
Injured while escaping	11	11
Loss of judgment/panic	7	7
Entered/remained for rescue	4	4
Received delayed warning	2	2
Over exertion/heart attack	1	1
Unknown/unclassified	59	58
Total	102	101

The action of nearly 60% of fatalities is unknown or unclassified. Keeping exits and pathways clear, and having a well-rehearsed escape plan can reduce the number of fire deaths in Alberta homes. Returning or remaining in a burning building is a high risk activity that can have fatal consequences.

Escape plans ... why bother?

Would you know how to escape if a fire broke out in your house? What about your children or other family members? Do they know how to escape too?

When a fire strikes, you may only have seconds to get out alive. Therefore taking steps ahead of time to discuss and develop a fire escape plan can be a critical factor in ensuring that everyone in your family will be able escape should a fire occur. The fact that 63 per cent of all fire deaths and 60 per cent of fire injuries occur in the home is a compelling reason to create a fire escape plan.

According to the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office, smoke inhalation is the number one cause of death in home fires. "Smoke has toxic gases such as carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide, which can be lethal," said Rick McCullough, Alberta Fire Commissioner. "Early detection of smoke during a fire and the sound from a smoke alarm can provide valuable life-saving seconds to escape from a building. In addition, a well practiced fire escape plan will enable everyone to escape quickly and safely."

In some ways, creating a fire escape plan is like buying insurance. You hope you don't ever have to use it, but if something happens, you're glad you made the effort to put it in place.

No matter where you live or how many people live in your home, it is important to make sure that everyone understands and practices a fire escape plan. The first step in creating a fire escape plan is to draw your escape plan and arrange a place to meet outside. If possible, plan two ways out of every room.

Just having a fire escape plan isn't enough, though. To escape safely from a home fire you've got to make sure that everyone in the home has practiced the plan. Hold a family meeting and discuss your escape plan with everyone who lives in your home. Make sure that everyone knows that if the smoke alarm goes off or someone shouts "fire", they need to get out as quickly as possible.

Make sure that all your windows and doors can be easily opened by all members of your family. Children need to be able to open their bedroom windows if needed, so be sure they know how to open them.

Next, test your smoke alarm by pressing the test button to make sure it is in good working condition. Use the test to start your first practice fire drill. Be sure to practice your plan twice a year with every person who lives in your house.

"In a typical home fire, you may have as little as two minutes to escape from the time the smoke alarm sounds. Knowing how to use those minutes wisely can make a life-saving difference, so be sure to plan and practice your escape," added McCullough.

Other important tips include:

- In basements, place furniture under the window to aid in escaping.
- In two story homes, have a rescue ladder nearby.

- If there are any obstacles blocking your escape route, move them. Nothing should stand in the way of a safe, quick exit.
- Children need to understand the importance of **GET OUT** and **STAY OUT**. Once the children are outside they need to stay outside, and go to the pre-arranged meeting location (tree, light, fire hydrant, etc.) to confirm that everyone has escaped from the building.

Working with your family to plan your escape routes ensures that everyone will know how to escape in an emergency.

Escape planning critical for heavy sleepers

Is someone in your family a heavy sleeper? Whether it's a child or an adult, people who are heavy sleepers need extra action if there is a fire in your home. That's because heavy sleepers may not wake up when a smoke alarm sounds. Or, their judgment may be impaired when they do wake up because they are groggy and confused.

Current research indicates that children may have different sleep patterns than adults, which may prevent them from hearing and reacting appropriately to alarms. It appears that children, especially those under 15, have a deep-sleep phase in the first few hours after they fall asleep, which may prevent them from hearing and reacting appropriately to smoke alarms. This does not mean that smoke alarms are useless; rather, it means that, in addition to having smoke alarms, fire escape planning is an even greater necessity.

Smoke alarms save lives by providing you with an early warning of smoke and fire danger. However, you won't know how your children or household members will react to the sound of a smoke alarm until you've tested their response to it. When you have only moments to get out safely, a fire is not the time to discover these obstacles. If your family practices a home fire drill at least twice a year (including during the night) you can identify these issues and plan for them in your fire escape plan.

For children and other family members who sleep through alarms, appoint an adult or babysitter to be responsible for them in advance. Practice escape drills so your children know how the alarm sounds and what it means. By practicing your escape plan, you can find out any problems with safe escape beforehand and take action before it is too late.

Children are not the only ones at risk of sleeping through an alarm. The elderly, sleep-deprived students, shift workers, teenagers, the hearing impaired and anyone taking sedating medication or alcohol or drugs may be affected. Routine home fire drills will help you detect unanticipated special needs when the smoke alarm sounds.

It is a frightening thought to realize that your child or household member may sleep through the piercing sound of a smoke alarm. However, by planning and practicing a fire escape plan at night you can identify potential problems and solve them.

Smoke alarms – one of the most important features in your home

Did you know that smoke alarms are an important tool in alerting people to a fire in their home? Not only do they detect smoke, but they sound an alarm too. Every year, statistics prove that smoke alarms do save lives. But ... they can only do the job if they are properly installed and in good working order.

According to a survey commissioned by the Canada Safety Council and Duracell in April 2006, 86% of Canadians have smoke alarms installed in the correct areas of their homes. And while the Alberta Fire Code makes smoke alarms mandatory in all Alberta homes, a surprising 6% of Albertans do not have smoke alarms. The study also revealed that Albertans have the oldest fire alarms and are the most guilty for not testing their fire alarms. Equally alarming is the fact that 31% of Albertans removed the batteries from their alarms for a reason other than to replace older batteries.

Fires can grow and spread very quickly, therefore, having working smoke alarms in your home can mean the difference between life and death. However, these life-saving devices are only effective if they're working properly. That includes proper installation, and a steady supply of electricity from a battery or household current. Once the alarm sounds, you may have as few as two minutes to escape. Use the tips below to learn how to effectively use your smoke alarm's early warning to get out safely.

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including outside of every sleeping area and in the basement. Follow the manufacturers' instructions.
- Test smoke alarms once a month, following manufacturers' directions, to ensure that they are effective. To test a smoke alarm, push the test button. The alarm should sound within 20 seconds.
- Replace the smoke alarm batteries once a year, or as soon as the alarm chirps, which is a warning that the battery is low.
- Never disable or borrow a battery from a smoke alarm. If your smoke alarm goes off unnecessarily, relocate it farther from kitchens or bathrooms (cooking fumes or steam can trigger the alarm).
- Regularly vacuum or dust your smoke alarms, following the manufacturer's instructions, to keep them working properly.
- Replace smoke alarms every 10 years. If you can't remember how old the alarm is, it's probably time for a new one.
- Make sure the smoke alarms in your home have a stamp of approval on the product and packaging by a recognized testing and approval organization, such as ULC or CSA.
- Make sure everyone in your home knows what to do when the alarm sounds – get out of the house as quickly as possible, and go to an agreed upon meeting place.

It is also a good idea to develop a "family escape plan" in case a fire occurs in your home. Practice the plan and make sure your children understand what they should do if they hear warning sounds from smoke alarms. The escape plan should include a meeting point outside the home.

“Early detection of fires saves lives and reduces damage to the house and contents. Statistics show that fewer deaths or serious injuries occur in households where smoke alarms are installed and maintained,” said Rick McCullough, Alberta Fire Commissioner. “If there is a fire in your home, smoke alarms provide your family's first line of defense. They give you an early warning that danger is present, and could give your family time to reach safety.”

Taking action when the alarm sounds

It sits there quietly or, occasionally, it might send out a chirping noise. Unfortunately, too many Albertans ignore it or see it as a nuisance. But your fire alarm is a critical part of keeping you and your family safe. And when the smoke alarm goes off, it is your signal to get out of your home quickly. Smoke alarms are designed to detect smoke very early. This gives you and your family precious seconds needed to escape from homes or buildings before the fire and smoke spread.

The sound of a smoke alarm alerts everyone that smoke or fire is nearby. Make sure that everyone in your home knows what to do when the alarm sounds and there is smoke or fire.

- Get out quickly if there is a fire, because fire moves extremely fast.
- Teach children to never hide from smoke and fire in closets or under beds. It is not possible to hide from fire ... but it is possible to escape. Young children, the elderly or disabled should alert parents or caregivers for help in escaping safely.
- Know two ways out of all rooms. If heat or smoke blocks the usual fire exit (door), then use the second way out (another door or the window).
- Test doors before opening them.
 - Feel the door and look for smoke coming in around the edges.
 - If the door is not hot and there is no smoke coming in, open it slowly, but be prepared to slam it shut if heat or smoke rush in.
 - If the door is hot, use your other exit.
- If you must escape through smoke, get low and go under the smoke to the nearest exit. Smoke will rise to the ceiling, leaving cooler, cleaner air close to the floor.
- If you live in an apartment building and the smoke alarm goes off, only use the stairs. NEVER use an elevator.

Stop being a nuisance

There's nothing quite like the smell of burned toast. It lingers for hours and, even worse, it often causes the smoke alarm to sound. Unfortunately, our first reaction is to remove or disconnect the batteries. But that is the worst possible action we could take.

Nuisance alarms, as they're called, usually occur when toast or other cooking items are burned. They can also occur when opening the door of a hot oven or when opening the bathroom door after a hot, steamy shower. Instead of telling people to stop removing or disconnecting the batteries of their smoke alarms, the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office encourages Albertans to use the following tips to keep smoke alarms active but avoid nuisance alarms.

- Keep ovens and stovetop burners clean.
- Clean out accumulations of crumbs in the bottom of toasters and try turning down the timer setting.
- Use the fan on the range hood when cooking to help remove steam and combustion particles from the air.
- Try moving the alarm to another location. Moving a smoke alarm just a few centimeters can often be enough to significantly reduce nuisance alarms.
- Install smoke alarms with a pause or hush feature that will temporarily silence the alarm and then automatically re-set itself.
- Replace ionization alarms located near kitchens with photoelectric ones, which may be less likely to activate due to cooking activities.
- Keep smoke alarms in the best possible working order by vacuuming them annually and replacing alarms that are more than 10 years old.

For more information about steps you can take to avoid nuisance alarms, visit www.makeitstop.ca.

Staying fire safe in apartments

Apartment fires result from the same causes as fires in other homes – cooking, heating equipment, smoking, children playing with matches and lighters, electrical systems and arson. However, the potential for fire growth, risk to life and catastrophic property loss is much greater. Instead of displacing one family, a fire in an apartment or condominium can force many families out of their homes. If you live in apartment, take the time now to be prepared. You are far more likely to do the right thing in a real fire if you are prepared for an emergency.

- Learn your building's evacuation plans. Make sure everyone in your household knows where to go if the fire alarm sounds and practice your escape plan together. Be sure your building manager posts evacuation plans in high traffic common areas, such as lobbies.
- Learn the sound of your building's fire alarm.
- Know at least two escape routes (including windows) from every room in your apartment or condominium.
- In the event of a fire, you may have to escape in the dark by feeling your way along the wall. Be prepared. Count the number of doors between your living unit and the two nearest building exits.
- Know where to find your building's fire alarms, and learn how to use them.
- Post emergency fire department numbers near all telephones.
- Know who is responsible for maintaining important safety systems in your building. Make sure that nothing blocks or otherwise interferes with these devices, and promptly report any sign of damage or malfunction to building management.
- Never lock fire exits or block doorways, halls, or stairways. Fire doors not only provide a way out during a fire, they also slow the spread of fire and smoke. Never prop fire doors open.
- When you hear the building fire alarm take it seriously. Every second you delay wastes valuable time that you need to escape safely. For this reason you should regularly practice a home escape plan. If a fire starts in your building you must know how to get out quickly. Don't wait to find out the severity of the situation. Never use the elevator during a fire emergency. If you are unable to use the stairs, stay in your apartment and call 911. Tell the dispatcher where you are and ask for help. If the fire is in your unit, quickly go to the stairwell, pull the fire alarm, and wait on the stair landing for help.
- Test doors before you open them. Kneeling or crouching, reach up as high as you can and touch the door, the knob, and the space between the door and its frame with the back of your hand. If the door is hot, use an alternative escape route.
- If the door feels cool, open it carefully and be ready to slam it shut if smoke or heat rush in.
- Once you are out, stay out, and stay out of the way of firefighters. Tell the fire department if you know of anyone trapped in the building. Do not go back inside for any reason, until the firefighters tell you it is safe to do so.

If you are unable to escape from the building, stay calm. If possible, go to a room with an outside window and a telephone. Close the door between you and the fire. Stuff the cracks

around the door with towels, rags or bedding and cover the vents to keep smoke out of the room.

If there's a phone in the room where you're trapped, call the fire department and tell them exactly where you are. Do this even if you can see fire trucks on the street below. Wait at the window and signal for help with a flashlight or by waving a sheet or other light-coloured cloth.

If possible, open the window at the top and bottom, but do not break the window. Be ready to close the window quickly if smoke rushes in.

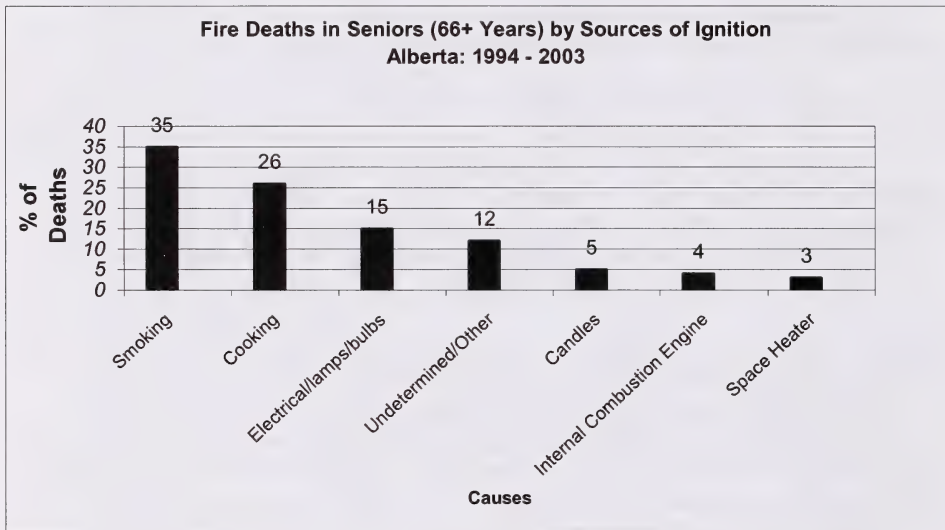
Be patient. Rescuing all the occupants of a high-rise building can take several hours.

Fire safety for seniors

Statistics don't lie. Fire safety is crucial for seniors. In fact, seniors (66+ years of age) are the most vulnerable to fire deaths in Alberta. Their death rate is approximately two times the Alberta average of 1.1 fire deaths per 100,000 population.

Seniors may face additional fire risk factors. This can be due to weaker physical condition or age-related changes that affect their senses and reduce mobility. In fact, cognitive changes, such as memory loss or dementia, can be more hazardous than physical changes as individuals may not realize they are in danger and may even engage in risky behaviour. Alcohol consumption or the side effects of prescribed medication can also add to the risks.

Although seniors accounted for only 19% of fire deaths from 2001-2005, statistically they have the highest risk of dying in a home fire in Alberta. The leading causes of fire deaths and injuries in older adults are cooking, smoking materials and the misuse of portable space heaters (as indicated in the table below).



Whether living independently or in a care facility, there are steps seniors can take to remain safe from a fire. Share the following tips with your aging loved ones to increase the level of safety in their home:

- Be prepared for fire – make sure you know exactly what to do and where to go if there is a fire. Make a home escape plan or refer to your building's fire safety plan.
- Have a smoke alarm installed on every level of the home, especially near sleeping areas. Every month, test the alarms by using a broom handle or cane to gently push the alarm test button. Make sure everyone can hear the smoke alarms from all areas of the home.
- Wear tight-fitting or rolled-up sleeves when cooking and don't reach over a hot burner. If a pot catches fire, cover it with a lid and turn off the burner.
- If clothes catch fire, lower yourself to the ground, cover your face with your hands and roll over and over to put out the flames. If you can't do this, grab a towel or blanket and smother the flames.

- Give space heaters space -- keep them at least 1 metre (3 feet) away from everything -- including you. A slight brush against a heater could set clothing on fire. Always unplug space heaters when not in use.
- Have the furnace and chimney inspected by a professional prior to the start of winter. Keep newspapers, rags, and other combustible materials away from the furnace, hot water heater, or space heater. Keep flammable materials, such as curtains or furniture, at least three feet from space heaters. Watch for electrical overload signals such as dimming lights when a heating appliance goes on; call a qualified electrician if this occurs. Stress that the oven should never be used as a heater if the house feels too cold or the furnace goes off.
- For smokers, designate a smoker's area away from upholstered materials to lessen the opportunity for something to catch on fire. Also use large, deep ashtrays and always make sure cigarette butts are out. Never smoke when lying down, or when drowsy or in bed.
- Keep the bedroom door shut when sleeping to provide more time to escape if a fire occurs.
- Never use extension cords with a space heater or an electric blanket. Extension cords should only be used for temporary use.
- Never run electrical cords under a carpet or rug.
- Don't leave the kitchen while you are cooking. If you have to leave the kitchen to answer the doorbell or talk on the phone, set a timer or take a spoon to remind yourself that you are cooking.
- It is a good idea to keep a pair of slippers, eyeglasses and flashlight by your bed at night. If you hear your smoke alarm at night you will be prepared to get out of your home quickly. Once you hear the sound of your smoke alarm, every second counts for your escape. Make a plan that includes two safe ways out of every room to help you get out and away from the fire. Remember that fire grows very quickly. There is no time to gather belongings; pets can usually get out on their own.
- Elevators should never be used in a fire emergency. Everyone must use the stairwells to leave the building. If you are unable to use stairs, you should stay in an area of refuge. An apartment is a good example of an area of refuge. It has a door to keep the smoke out, a phone from which to call 9-1-1 for help and windows to signal from.

SIDEBAR

Most fire victims die from smoke, not flames. Smoke always rises so it is important for seniors to Get Low and Go. While the old adage used to be crawl on your hands and knees to safety, this isn't the best advice for seniors. Crawling may be difficult and/or extremely slow for seniors. In the early stages of fire, where there is a wisp of smoke near the ceiling, a senior's best action is to get out of the house as quickly as possible. If it is necessary for a senior to travel through a smoky area, he should crouch down a bit to get low and go under the smoke to the nearest exit. Since smoke rises to the ceiling, cooler, cleaner air will be closer to the floor.

Fire safety for persons with disabilities

Do you have a family member or visitor who has a disability? If so, it's important that you include them in fire escape planning. While fire escape plans should be practiced by everyone, people with disabilities have additional factors to consider. Most importantly, they need to focus on their abilities to escape a fire and what they can do to ensure that they get out or can be protected if a fire does occur. If special assistance or devices are required, they need to be identified and arranged for as part of the escape plan. The guidelines below will help persons with disabilities to increase their fire safety:

Make escape easy – consider locating your bedroom on the ground floor near an exit, making escape easier. Make sure that smoke alarms are installed in or near any sleeping area. Also consider having ramps constructed for emergency exits.

Special alarm – if you or any member of your household is deaf or hard of hearing, install a smoke alarm that uses a flashing strobe light or vibration along with the sound alarm.

Test the alarm – it is important to know that your smoke alarm will work in the event of a fire emergency. Test smoke alarms monthly. Alarms that can be tested using a flashlight or television remote are particularly helpful for people with mobility challenges, people who are blind or have low vision, or for older adults.

Make a plan – be sure that the escape plan includes everyone in the household. If you or someone you live with cannot escape alone, designate a member of the household to assist them (have a back up plan in case the designated helper is away at the time of the emergency). Conduct regular fire drills to determine if everyone is able to hear and respond to smoke alarms. If someone requires additional warning or uses a guide dog, incorporate that need into the fire escape plan.

Communicate – post emergency telephone numbers in central locations. Keep a communications device nearby so that communication with emergency personnel is possible should fire or smoke trap you in your room.

Keep a flashlight handy – have a working flashlight in your sleeping area. You may need it to escape in the dark or signal firefighters if you are trapped by a fire.

Talk to your fire department – contact your local fire department to review emergency escape procedures and discuss your abilities and any challenges.

SIDEBAR

Special alarms available

People who are deaf or hard of hearing should use smoke alarms with strobe (flashing) lights. Make sure that the alarm you are using has been tested by an independent testing laboratory. The alarms for sleeping areas with strobe lights are required to be of a special high intensity that can wake a sleeping person. Most major smoke alarm companies offer alarms with strobe lights.

Some alarms are equipped with large, easy to push test buttons. Alarms that can be tested by using a flashlight or television remote are particularly helpful for people with mobility disabilities, people who are blind or have low vision, or for older adults.

Fire safety for college and university students

The recent fire deaths of two university students in Victoria, British Columbia provide a strong reminder of the need for fire safety in temporary residences. That's why the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office is encouraging all post-secondary students living away from home to ensure they live in a safe environment.

Provided below is a list of things that students can easily do to protect themselves from fire or survive in the event that a fire does occur.

- Live in housing equipped with an automatic fire sprinkler system.
- Ensure that your housing has interconnected smoke alarms on all levels and that they are working at all times.
- Take each alarm activation seriously and evacuate. If an alarm is being activated needlessly by cooking or by a shower, relocate the alarm. Do not disable it.
- Always know two ways out of the building you are in, whether it is your house, apartment, residence hall, movie theater or nightclub.
- Use ashtrays and make sure cigarette butts are disposed of properly.
- After a party, check the seat cushions on couches and chairs for cigarettes that may lie smoldering, waiting to start a fire in the middle of the night.
- Do not overload extension cords, which may cause them to overheat.
- Never leave lit candles unattended.

Make sure you have a fire extinguisher and, more importantly, know how to use it BEFORE a fire breaks out.

Preventing the #1 cause of home fires

If you had to guess, what would you say is the #1 cause of home fires in Alberta? Here's a hint – it's something most Albertans do every day in a variety of ways. Would you be surprised to know that the answer is cooking?

Yes, cooking! Not only is it the #1 cause of fires and home fire injuries, but it also the second major cause of fire deaths in Alberta.

Cooking fires account for almost one quarter of all reported home fires in Alberta each year. Most home cooking fires happen in the kitchen and occur between 5 and 6 p.m. or between midnight and 1 a.m.

Cooking fires often occur when people leave their cooking unattended. They may be distracted or pre-occupied by talking on the phone, forgetting that the stove is turned on, watching television, reading a book or answering the door. Other possibilities include falling asleep, being under the influence of alcohol, or being drowsy from medication or fatigue. While a few minutes may not seem like a long time, that's all it takes for a fire to start.

The majority of cooking fires start with cooking oils, such as vegetable oils or animal fats, being ignited. When these oils are heated beyond 200 degrees Celsius, flammable vapours are formed, which are easily ignited by flames from a gas stove burner or contact with a hot electric stove element. If the oil gets hot enough, the released vapours can self-ignite. Re-used oil, which may have food residues in it, can catch fire at an even lower temperature than fresh oil. In Alberta, most home cooking fires and injuries occur when cooking oil becomes overheated while frying foods in pots or pans on electric stoves.

The kitchen can also provide fuel for a fire with common household items such as paper and plastic bags or curtains and wall coverings. Fire can also happen in the oven or the microwave or on a barbeque.

Be safe when cooking by remembering these safety tips:

- always stay focused on your cooking.
- keep children and pets away from cooking areas
- fry foods in temperature controlled appliances designed for a maximum temperature of 200 degrees Celsius
- clean food and grease from stovetops
- keep potholders, oven mitts and other flammable items away from the stove top.

Stay focused in the kitchen

Whether you are a gourmet chef or simply heat meals in the microwave, we all do some form of cooking every day. That's usually a good thing – you can learn new skills, create mouth-watering meals and even save a few dollars if you cook at home. But with all these positive factors, there is also a down side. The truth is, cooking fires continue to be the number one cause of home fires and home fire injuries in Alberta.

If you or someone you know cooks at home, be sure to follow these safety tips to avoid a kitchen fire.

- Check on your cooking regularly and use a timer to remind you that the stove or oven is on.
- Keep children and pets away from cooking areas.
- Use the back burners of the stove whenever possible.
- Turn pot handles inward to reduce the risk of them being knocked over.
- If frying foods, use a temperature controlled deep-fat fryer or skillet designed for a maximum temperature of 200 degrees Celsius.
- Keep potholders, oven mitts, utensils, food packaging, paper and plastic bags, towels and other flammable objects away from the stovetop.
- Avoid wearing loose fitting clothing or dangling sleeves while cooking.
- Clean food and grease from stovetops.
- Avoid plugging multiple items into the same wall socket.

Microwave safety tips include:

- Always plug a microwave directly into the wall rather than using an extension cord.
- Use only microwave-safe containers to heat food.
- Allow food to cool for a minute or more before removing from the microwave.
- Open microwave containers slowly as hot steam escaping from the containers can cause painful burns.
- Never use aluminum foil or metal objects in a microwave oven.

Taking a few simple preventative actions can ensure you are prepared in the event that a fire does start in the kitchen. These include keeping an oven mitt and lid nearby when cooking. If a small grease fire starts in the pan, you can smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan. In the case of an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you or your clothing. Also keep a multipurpose fire extinguisher in the kitchen in case of an emergency and make sure you know how to use it before an emergency occurs.

Preventing fire injuries

The largest source of fire injuries is related to cooking, followed by smoking. By following the safety tips below, you can help lessen the incidence of fire injuries in Alberta.

Cooking safety

- Ensure that electrical outlets located in your kitchen, bathroom and other wet areas are protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI), which help reduce electrical shock injuries.
- Always stay in the kitchen when you're cooking something on the stove. Be sure to give it your full attention. If you must leave the room for a moment, turn down the heat first, and return quickly.
- Always turn pot handles inward to prevent the chance of the pot being knocked over.
- Roll up long or loose sleeves when cooking.
- Avoid reaching over burners and other hot surfaces.
- Avoid storing any items that you use frequently directly over the stove.
- Keep children away from cooking areas.
- Place hot pans and cookie sheets away from the edges of counters where children (or pets) can reach them.
- Use heavy oven mitts and hot pads when cooking.
- Keep the area around the stove clean and free of things that can burn (e.g. dish towels, paper or plastic bags, curtains).
- Learn how to prevent and extinguish a small pan fire.
- Removed lids or other coverings from microwaved food carefully to prevent steam burns.
- Keep your hot water heater set at 120 degrees F or lower to prevent scalds from hot tap water.
- Keep small electrical appliances (e.g. toasters, radios) away from the sink.
- Unplug electrical appliances when not in use.
- If a pot or pan of hot cooking oil catches fire, never carry the flaming pot to the sink or back door. The intense heat of the flames can burn your hands or arms and the extremely hot (200 degrees Celsius) oil can inflict severe burns if splashed. Spilling such oil on the floor can also cause a slip hazard.

If you do receive a burn injury, treat it immediately by running it under cool running water for three to five minutes. Do not apply butter, lotion or ice. Apply a sterile bandage to the injured area. If the burn is serious, get medical treatment immediately.

Smoking safety

- Designate a smoking area away from upholstered materials to lessen the chance of something catching on fire.
- Use large, deep ashtrays.
- Always make sure cigarette butts are out.
- Avoid smoking when drowsy or when lying down.
- After a party, check seat cushions on couches and chairs for cigarettes that may be smoldering.
- Store matches and lighters up high (preferably in a locked cabinet) away from children.

Avoiding fire safety hazards at home

Fire Prevention Week is the ideal time to learn more about fire prevention and fire safety. Considering that homes are the second most frequent place where fires occur in Alberta and that the majority of fire deaths (65 per cent) and fire injuries (58 per cent) happen in homes, it is important to check your home for safety hazards. Additional safety tips that you can follow in your home are listed below.

- Give space heaters plenty of space. Space heaters should be at least one metre (three feet) away from anything that could burn. Always make sure to turn heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Once a year, arrange for a professional inspection of central furnaces, water heaters, fireplaces and wood stoves, including chimneys and chimney connectors. These heating devices should be serviced as needed or as recommended by the manufacturers.
- Lit candles should be monitored constantly by an adult and extinguished when the adult leaves the room or goes to sleep. Use candleholders that won't tip over easily. Candleholders should be made of non-combustible materials and should be big enough to catch dripping wax.
- If there are smokers in your home, make sure ashtrays are large and deep so that they won't tip over. Douse cigarette and cigar butts with water before discarding them.
- Keep matches and lighters up high and out of children's sight and reach—preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Replace or repair any electrical device that has a loose, frayed, or broken cord. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for plugging in appliances. As an added precaution, avoid plugging more than one high-wattage appliance into a single plug-in.
- In homes with small children, plug-ins should have plastic safety covers.
- To reduce the risk of electrical shock, install ground-fault circuit-interrupters (GFCIs).
- Unwanted electrical arcing, often occurring in damaged wires or cords, can generate high temperatures and cause fire. Arc-fault circuit-interrupters (AFCIs) protect against fire by continuously monitoring the electrical current in a circuit and shutting off a circuit when an unwanted arcing fault is detected. (The National Electrical Code requires AFCIs installed in bedrooms when new residences are built).
- Liquids and gases like kerosene, gasoline, and propane are highly flammable. Store them outside the home in a properly ventilated shed or garage. Store them only in small quantities in their original containers or in safety containers. Never bring even a small amount of gasoline indoors. The vapours are highly flammable and can be ignited by a tiny spark.

Keeping your home fire safe

In addition to tips for safety in the kitchen and smoking safety, here are a few additional tips to help keep your home fire safe.

Being prepared

- Make a fire escape plan for your family. Find two exits out of every room. Pick a meeting place outside. Practice makes perfect -- hold a family fire drill at least twice each year.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Put them inside or near every bedroom. Test them monthly to make sure they work. Put in new batteries once a year.
- Teach every family member to Stop, Drop and Roll if clothes catch fire.
- Consider having a home fire sprinkler system installed in your new home, or when you remodel.
- Learn how and when to use a fire extinguisher.
- If you have a fire in your home, once you get out, stay out.
- Do not go back inside for any reason.

Avoiding candle fires

- Never leave burning candles unattended. Do not allow children to keep candles or incense in their rooms.
- Always use stable candle holders made of material that won't catch fire, such as metal, glass, etc.
- Blow out candles when adults leave the room

Play it safe around gasoline and other products

- Store gasoline in a garage or shed in a container approved for gasoline storage.
- Never bring or use gasoline indoors; and use it as a motor fuel only.
- Close the lid on all dangerous products and put them away after using them.
- Store them away from the home and in a safe place with a lock.

Grilling outdoors

- Never leave barbeque grills unattended while in use.
- Keep grills at least three feet away from other objects including the house and any shrubs or bushes.

Prevent fires caused by heating

- Always keep matches and lighters in a locked cabinet.
- Give space heaters space – keep them at least three feet away from things that can burn, such as curtains or piles of newspapers or magazines. Always turn off heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Use a qualified service person to inspect chimneys, fireplaces, wood and coal stoves and central furnaces once a year. Have them cleaned out when necessary.
- Keep things that can burn away from your fireplace and keep a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace.

Are safety hazards lurking in your home?

Ahh, home sweet home. Whether you live in a bungalow, apartment or two story building, you try to make your home a comfortable and relaxing environment. But did you know that you've also got a number of safety hazards in your kitchen and home? Any appliance that creates heat has the potential to cause burns. That includes irons, space heaters, gas or electric stoves and ovens, clothes dryers and dishwashers.

Irons can get extremely hot, and remain for some time after it has been unplugged or turned off. Play it safe by turning off your iron as soon as you have finished with it and make sure it is placed in a location where it cannot be easily tipped over by children or pets.

Even though electric space heaters don't have an open flame, the heating elements of some types of electric heaters are hot enough to ignite nearby combustibles like draperies, paper, clothing, furniture, and flammable liquids. Be sure to check surrounding objects periodically to see if they feel hot. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions to see how far away the heater should be placed from combustible materials, and for how far the heater should be placed from the floor so that carpeting or flooring materials don't ignite. Also, keep portable electric heaters away from water. If that is not possible, always use a ground fault circuit interrupter.

Stoves and ovens can cause burns and fires. Keeping food crumbs and flammable objects such as oven mitts, towels or plastic grocery bags away from the appliance can lessen the risk of fire or injury. Most importantly, never leave a stove unattended.

Clothes dryers are another potential fire spot. By forgetting to clean the lint filter on a frequent basis, you could cause a fire. Other safety tips with dryers include vent the dryer to the outdoors and avoid putting synthetic fabrics, plastic, rubber or foam into a dryer. They retain heat, which can cause a fire. Also, never leave the dryer running when you're not home.

In addition to scalding water, dishwashers also include sharp utensils and moving parts that tiny hands can try to grab. Be careful when opening a dishwasher as the steam that comes out can be extremely hot. Also, never leave small children unattended with a dishwasher that is in use.

Even though electric mixers do not generate heat, they are also a potential safety hazard. The fact that they are plugged into an electrical outlet and have very fast moving blades creates a concern. Never put your hands anywhere near a running mixer blade or use utensils near it. Also, if you have long hair, keep it away from the action too.

Make your home as safe as possible by minimizing hazards with these commonly used appliances.

Play safe with electricity

Chances are, you use electricity in many ways every day. For most Albertans, switching on lights, watching television, surfing the Internet and talking on the phone are daily events. And each of them requires electricity. In fact, even if you use a cell phone for your phone conversations you still rely on electricity to charge your batteries.

Along with the need for electricity in our lives we also need to remember a few basic fire prevention steps. Take a few moments to review the following tips to ensure your home is safe from electrical fires.

- Use the right bulbs in lamps and light fixtures (look inside the light fixture to see which light bulb wattage you need for that fixture).
- All electrical outlets and switches should be covered by faceplates.
- The electrical outlet in your bathroom should have a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI). This protects you from a dangerous shock if water and electricity come together.
- All electrical cords should be in good working condition.
- Avoid tying or knotting cords.
- Ensure that furniture does not sit on cords.
- Look for the label from a recognized standards organization (e.g. CSA or ULC) when you buy any electrical appliance or cord.
- Unplug toaster ovens, coffee makers and other small appliances after using them.
- Keep appliances dry and away from water at all times.
- Avoid plugging in too many appliances at once.
- Call an electrician if your lights flicker or your power goes out frequently.

Avoiding a potential poison in your home

Are you aware that there is a potential poison that is lurking in many homes? This poison is very difficult to detect because it is an odourless, colourless and invisible toxic gas. Have you guessed it yet? It's carbon monoxide (CO).

Carbon monoxide is produced when there is an inadequate supply of oxygen. There are many potential sources of carbon monoxide in homes and garages. Sources include all fuel-burning appliances, especially those used for heating and cooking, such as fireplaces, clogged chimney flues, water heaters, furnaces, gas space heaters, wood and gas stoves, charcoal grills, and barbecues. Vehicle exhaust fumes, generators and tobacco smoke are other potential sources.

CO poisoning can increase during winter, when homes are more tightly sealed to conserve heat and fuel-burning appliances are used more often. The carbon monoxide can ignite or even explode when it builds up in an enclosed, unventilated area and comes in contact with a spark or flame.

The first step to preventing CO poisoning is to prevent production or seepage into the house. You can do this by:

- making sure fuel burning appliances in your home are installed, maintained and inspected for safety and reliability;
- making sure there is an adequate supply of air for complete burning of fuel in natural gas or any fuel burning appliance;
- making sure there is proper venting of fumes from the appliances to the outside through vents and chimneys; and
- if your house has an attached garage, never running a vehicle, even with the garage door open. Exhaust fumes containing CO will enter your house. If you must warm up your vehicle in the winter, back it out into your driveway and close the garage door.

Additional steps you can take to avoid CO build up in the house include:

- Buy and install a CO alarm. Be sure to check that your alarm has been approved and labelled by an independent testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC), Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or the Canadian Standards Association (CSA).
- Ensure that your CO alarm is equipped with an audible warning alarm.
- Install at least one CO alarm on every level of your home, including the basement (but not in unfinished attics) and outside each bedroom or sleeping area in your home.
- Follow the manufacturer's directions for location instructions. Manufacturers of CO alarms must ensure that their installation requirements meet CSA standards.
- Locate CO alarms about five feet away from fuel burning appliances such as furnaces or fireplaces.
- Avoid installing an alarm near a window or air register where drafts can reduce the alarm operation and sensitivity.

Just like smoke alarms, CO alarms require regular simple maintenance that includes replacing the batteries once a year, or as soon as the alarm “chirps” (a warning that the battery is low). CO alarms don't last forever. Replace your CO alarms according to the manufacturer's instructions and never disconnect or disable a CO alarm, even temporarily.

Regular vacuuming or dusting of your CO alarm can help keep it working properly. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning directions. Test your CO alarm at least once a month (both the circuitry and the sensor inside the alarm), following the manufacturer's instructions for proper testing procedures.

What to do if the alarm sounds?

- Contact your local fire department's non-emergency telephone number to find out what number to call if the CO alarm sounds. Post that number by the telephone and ensure that everyone in the household knows where it is located.
- If no one in the household has CO symptoms (headache, dizziness, nausea, fatigue), push the test/reset button to silence it, turn off fuel burning appliances and immediately ventilate the home by opening windows and outside doors. A qualified technician should be called immediately to inspect for sources of CO.
- If anyone is experiencing CO symptoms, immediately evacuate the home and call your local emergency service (9-1-1). Do not re-enter your home until a qualified technician has corrected the problem.
- Ventilation may dissipate CO build-up. Although your problem may appear to be temporarily solved, it is crucial to determine the source of the CO and make appropriate repairs.
- Make sure everyone in your home can hear and recognize the sound of the alarm and knows how to react immediately.
- Plan regular fire drills (twice a year) to ensure that everyone knows exactly what to do when the CO alarm sounds. Ensure two ways out of every room and establish a meeting place outside your home.

SIDEBAR -- Symptoms of CO poisoning

The initial symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to the flu, but without the fever. Usually everyone in the home suffers from the same symptoms at the same time, and the symptoms improve when you leave your home. Symptoms include headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea and dizziness. Many people with CO poisoning mistake their symptoms for the flu or are misdiagnosed, which can sometimes result in tragic deaths.

Moderate levels of CO exposure can cause death if the following symptoms persist for a long measure of time – headache, dizziness, nausea and light-headedness. High levels of CO can cause disorientation, unconsciousness or death within minutes.

Immediate measures you can take to help someone suffering from CO poisoning include getting the victim to fresh air. If you cannot get the victim(s) out of the house, then open all the windows and doors, and turn any combustion appliances off. Any one who was subjected to CO should be taken to a hospital emergency as quickly as possible. A simple blood test will be able to determine if CO poisoning has occurred.

Little things can make a big difference

Home fires can start from a variety of sources, from matches and lighters to extension cords or wires sitting too closely together. Other possibilities include improperly stored automotive cleaning fluids or paints or flammable items located too close to heating sources such as light bulbs or heaters. Take a few moments to review these additional safety tips to make your home as fire-safe as possible:

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Be sure to locate alarms outside sleeping areas. It's also a good idea to locate an alarm in locations where ignitable items are stored. And, remember to test your smoke alarms twice a year.
- Invest in good fire extinguishers, and keep one in the kitchen, in the basement and in the garage. Read the instructions so you know how to use it if needed. However, do not test it or it will need to be recharged.
- Always attend to cooking, and keep a pot lid handy, in case a fire starts. If it does, slide the lid over the pan and turn off the element. If a fire starts in the oven, turn the oven off and keep the door closed. For a microwave fire, unplug the cord and keep the door closed.
- Make sure that the extension cords you are using are never coiled or bunched together. The wires can generate heat which can melt the casing and ignite.
- Use only approved extension cords and avoid plugging too many appliances into one outlet.
- Place baseboard heaters so they are at least three inches away from baseboards or combustible items.
- Rinse oily rags and let them dry outdoors, then store them in a lidless metal container (never plastic).
- Place paint cleaners, thinners and solvents in open top plastic bins to keep them from spilling, leaving at least an inch between containers to allow air circulation and prevent them from overheating... Do not store them in a sealed container.
- Keep your bedroom doors closed when sleeping. This creates a smoke barrier between you and the fire, and provides extra time to escape.
- Create an escape plan that includes at least two escape routes from every room in your home. Practice your plan with every one who lives in your home.
- If building a new home, consider installing a residential sprinkler system.
- If a fire does occur, your first priority is to get out safely. Call 911 from outside of your home and never attempt to go back into the building.

For more information about keeping your home free from potential fire hazards, contact your local fire department.

Counterfeiting Can Kill: No One is Exempt

Tips for spotting and stopping counterfeit items

Many counterfeit items may present a danger to people's lives, such as faulty circuit breakers, computer power supply units, safety footwear, holiday lights, electrical power bars, extension cords and gas ranges. Some of these products are even showing up on the shelves of major retailers across North America as criminals use very sophisticated distribution networks. Canada has a system of safety and performance standards in place to help protect consumers – CSA International, which is a leading North American provider of product testing and certification services. The CSA International certification mark lets consumers know that a product has been tested and certified to meet the requirements of the applicable standards for safety and performance.

Illegal counterfeiting is a multi-billion dollar industry in Canada. Anyone can unwittingly purchase a counterfeit product or a product bearing counterfeit approval marks. While consumers often express concern about the performance of counterfeit products, the real threat is safety. Here are tips on how to spot and stop counterfeit items before they enter your home or workplace.

- **Look for the mark:** a system of standards has been put in place to test and certify products: avoid electrical products if a label from a recognized standards organization is missing.
- **Inspect the mark:** counterfeit certification marks have distinctive graphic features that are often not accurately reproduced by counterfeiters.
- **Inferior packaging:** counterfeit packaging often has poor design or only partial illustrations.
- **Poor spelling:** look for misspellings and unclear printing on products and labels.
- **Missing items:** check for a discrepancy between the contents of the product package and its description, as well as missing product information or package enclosures.
- **No brand name:** If a product doesn't include a brand identifier or trademark it's likely fake - brand-name companies want you to know whose product you're buying.
- **Significantly lower pricing:** if it's too good to be true, it probably is.
- **Cheap production:** check the "look and feel" of goods - fakes are often too light and too flimsy.
- **Know your retailer:** if in doubt, buy only from reputable, well-known stores.
- **Check with the experts:** Confirm CSA certification of a product by comparing the product's identification against the certification record at <http://directories.csa-international.org>

To report a counterfeit product or for more information about identifying counterfeit products, please visit www.csa-international.org

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